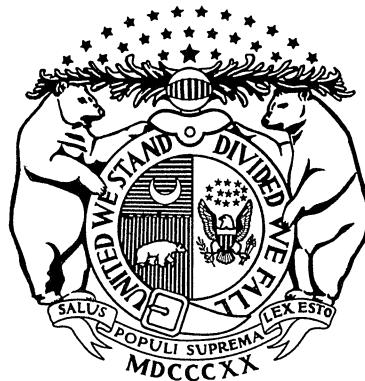


# **Interviews Conducted in the Hispanic Communities of St. Louis and Kansas City**



**The Governor's Advisory Council  
on Hispanic Affairs  
December 1980**

"INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED IN THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY OF ST. LOUIS"

1980

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## METHODS

With one exception the respondents in these interviews were referred to the interviewer by various individuals who work at the Image office in St. Louis. One individual interviewed was a personal acquaintance of the interviewer. The respondents were asked general background information such as place of birth, marital status, number of persons in the family, age and type of employment. They were then asked to relate personal experiences and problems which have occurred as Missouri residents. They were also asked if they had received assistance which could be available to them as a person who has special needs. Finally, each was asked what recommendations he or she would make to improve their quality of life. The purpose of the above was to determine the quality of life as experienced by the individual as a Hispanic in Missouri. Names of those interviewed have been changed to protect their identity.

## INTERVIEW: 1

### A. Citizenship and places of residence in U.S.

Miguel Moreno is a native of the United States. He was born in New Mexico and then moved as a small child to Denver. Previous to living in St. Louis he worked in Las Vegas for several years. He was transferred by the company for whom he had been working to St. Louis. He has lived in St. Louis for seventeen years.

### B. Personal data

Mr. Moreno is 51 years old. He is married and has two children, aged 17 and 12 years old.

### C. Education

Mr. Moreno completed eighth grade in Denver.

### D. While in Las Vegas Mr. Moreno worked in sales. After coming to St. Louis he lost this position and subsequently worked as a janitor. He reported that he found this work through the Missouri State Employment

Office. Mr. Moreno is obviously a Hispanic both in manner of speech and appearance. He reported that whenever he went to the employment office he was only referred to janitorial jobs although he had previous sales experience. He said, "When I asked about other jobs which were listed at the office the worker says the job is filled and when I ask why the job is still on the board, they just gave me my mop and broom." Also, with regard to jobs listed in the newspaper, he stated, "They tell me the job is filled before they interview me and three or four days later the ad is still in the paper."

While working as a janitor in a bank he said he was being harassed by a Vice President. When he tried to talk to other employees these people were given trouble by the Vice President and were fired if they persisted. He finally contacted an attorney who works for the Image office. The attorney spoke with the management at the bank and the problem ceased. Mr. Moreno is currently working as a musician at a Mexican restaurant. His wife, who is not a Hispanic, works as a waitress.

E. Personal relationships in U.S. and homeland.

Mr. Moreno is a third generation American who was raised as a Mexican-American. He considers himself to be an American. He did not report any contact with family outside of St. Louis.

F. Physical surroundings.

Because Mr. Moreno was interviewed in the restaurant where he is employed, the interviewer did not see his home. He reports that he has a good home in a pleasant neighborhood.

G. Quality of food, clothing and medical care.

Mr. Moreno indicated that he and his family are comfortable in these areas.

H. Basic values

The interviewer inferred that Mr. Moreno believes himself to be a responsible hardworking person. He takes pride in his home and work.

I. Knowledge of status

When the interviewer asked Mr. Moreno how he feels about his status he stated that he feels he and his family are discriminated against.

His eldest child has many social problems in school and is constantly in trouble for fighting. He also stated "We who have been here for generations have it a ---- of a lot harder than the wetbacks who come over here. They (society) turn you against your people. He feels that Mexicans get assistance that he, as an American, is unable to receive.

Mr. Moreno also stated that he believes that if the Nazi party did not exist that his life would be better. He feels that the Nazi party has a great deal of power in business and that the racist position of the party has been responsible for his inability to be more successful.

INTERVIEW: 2

A. Citizenship and places of residence in the U. S.

Maria Mojica is a native of Mexico. She has lived in the United States for 25 years. She was brought to the U. S. by a physician in Woodriver, Illinois for whom she worked as a housekeeper. When she married she moved to St. Louis with her husband. She is a U. S. citizen.

B. Personal data

Mrs. Mojica is 60 years old. Although she is still married she lives alone because her husband left her to live with another woman ten years ago. Her husband owns the house where she resides and has continued to pay the expenses for the house and its upkeep. Mrs. Mojica is responsible for all other aspects of her maintenance.

C. Education

Mrs. Mojica stated that she had a small amount of formal schooling in Mexico. She was not definite about the number of years but is probably only partially literate as she reported having difficulty in understanding and completing employment forms. After coming to St. Louis she went to school for about one year to learn restaurant work. She said that she already knew what was being taught but that she was told this would improve her employment opportunities.

D. Employment profile

Mrs. Mojica worked for the physician's family as a housekeeper for a short period. She felt that she was doing too much work for too little money. At this time she met her husband, also a Mexican and moved to St. Louis. Her husband did not want her to work but after a short time she felt she had to so that she could send money to her mother in Mexico. She worked as a hospital aide and also did babysitting in her home. When her husband left her she was advised by an attorney not to work but to force her husband to support her. Mr. Mojica was unable to give her enough and she was forced to return to work.

At this point she got a job doing laundry for an institution. After four years she left this job because she found the work too difficult physically. Subsequently she got her training in restaurant work. She worked at a vocational training school preparing food for seven years. At that time a new manager was hired and he demanded that she work at night. Mrs. Mojica does not drive and is afraid to take buses at night. Therefore she left this job. Mrs. Mojica was unemployed for one year and, because she had left her job "voluntarily" she was not eligible for unemployment compensation. She was finally able to get work in a

garment factory where she is currently employed as an inspector of the completed garments.

E. Personal relationships in the U. S. and homeland

Mrs. Mojica has relatives living in Mexico. She wishes she were financially able to bring them to St. Louis. She also has several close friends at work and in the neighborhood.

F. Physical surroundings

Mrs. Mojica's home is in a rundown neighborhood. The house is in poor condition with obvious structural problems.

G. Quality of food, clothing and medical care.

Mrs. Mojica was reticent about discussing these items in much detail. She seemed to have adequate food but the clothing which was observed was old and in poor condition.

However, she did discuss her medical situation more freely. She has diabetes and hypertension. For some time she was without medical care because she lacked money. A worker at the Image office recommended that she go to a free clinic which she has done. However, this is difficult for her because the clinic is only open during her working hours and is closed on Saturdays. In order to get medical treatment she must leave work and lose pay for the time she is gone. Her comment about this situation was "I manage." She has requested Social Security benefits on the basis of disability and has been told she does not qualify.

H. Basic values

This is difficult to evaluate. Mrs. Mojica seems to be a proud woman who is dealing as well as she can with a poor situation. Again, because of her reticence, it was impossible to obtain more detailed information.

I. Knowledge of status

Mrs. Mojica stated that she wishes she were able to receive more financial

aid before she is 62. She feels that her work is too hard for her but she must do so to survive. She also stated that she resents the aid being given to political refugees while she, an American, must struggle so hard.

INTERVIEW: 3

A. Citizenship and places of residence in the U. S.

Maria Vasquez was born and lived most of her life in Lima, Peru.

When her husband died seven years ago she came to the U. S. to join the rest of her family. Since that time she has lived continuously in St. Louis. She plans to become a U. S. citizen.

B. Personal data

Mrs. Vasquez is 55 years old. She has a high school aged son named Juan. She also has a daughter who is married and no longer living with her.

C. Education

Mrs. Vasquez has the equivalent of a Master of Arts degree in Literature from Lima, Peru. She studied English at St. Louis University.

D. Employment

Mrs. Vasquez worked in her home for four years doing clothing alterations. Since that time she has worked in the Head Start Program as an Assistant.

E. Personal relations in the U. S. and homeland

All of Mrs. Vasquez' immediate family live in St. Louis. She has a mother, a brother and sister and their families with whom she is in close contact.

F. Physical surroundings

Mrs. Vasquez' three room apartment is in an old but well-maintained neighborhood. The apartment is neat and well-kept although the furnishings are far from new.

G. Quality of food, clothing and medical care

Both Mrs. Vasquez and her son are impeccably neat. She sews all of their clothing. She said that she has been able to provide good nutrition for herself and her son. She also stated, however, that she seldom seeks medical care except in extreme need because of her limited financial resources. When she does go she has to bring her daughter to translate.

Mrs. Vasquez is only employed 40 weeks per year. During the summer she receives \$76 per week financial assistance. Her son has been unable to get summer work. This interview was done in September and at that time she had been unable to pay her utility bills. She was worried that they would cut off her utilities before she got her first paycheck in September.

H. Basic values

Mrs. Vasquez' mother is elderly and in poor health. Therefore both she and her son spend part of each day at the mother's apartment caring for her needs. It is a great trial for Mrs. Vasquez that her son has to be bussed to a school which is a great distance from their home. Before this occurred the son would go to see his grandmother at lunchtime and after school because the school was only ten blocks from the grandmother's apartment. He was able to take care of many of his grandmother's needs this way and this is felt to be very important. In addition, Mrs. Vasquez is no longer able to attend the teacher's conferences because of the distance from home.

Mrs. Vasquez is an educated woman who is extremely involved with her son's education and future and it disturbs her greatly to be cut off from this communication. She has asked the School Board to reconsider this policy because of their special need and has been refused.

In terms of her own employment she would like to be able to do more work in keeping with her training. She stated she did not know of any special aid or scholarships which are available for Hispanics. She would like to work as a language instructor or in a job which would utilize her education as a Spanish speaking person.

I. Knowledge of status

Mrs. Vasquez says that she loves the U. S. and does not feel that she suffered any special discrimination against her because she is a Hispanic.

INTERVIEW: 4

A. Citizenship and places of residence in the U. S.

Jose Morelo was born and raised in Mexico. He has lived in the U. S. for 5 years, first in Chicago and now in St. Louis. Carol Smith is a native of St. Louis.

B. Personal Data

Carol and Jose are married and have no children. He is 27 years old and she is 22.

C. Education

Jose has had 3 years of formal education. Carol has completed ninth grade. Jose has not had any additional schooling since coming to the U. S.

D. Employment profile

Jose did farm work in Mexico. He entered the U. S. illegally and joined some friends in Chicago so that he could earn more money. He worked as a dishwasher while in Chicago. He came to St. Louis because he was told he could earn \$305.00 per month. He works 65 hours per week. When Department of Labor agents investigated the restaurant

where he works, the owner told Jose and 2 other Mexicans to pretend they spoke no English. Jose was afraid not to cooperate because he might not be able to find another job. Carol is employed as a waitress.

E. Personal relations in U.S. and homeland.

All of Jose's relatives are living in Mexico. He has a large network of Mexican friends living in St. Louis and Chicago, many of whom share his illegal status in the U. S. Carol has no contact with her family and shares Jose's friendships.

F. Physical surroundings.

Carol and Jose live in a 2 bedroom apartment which is simply furnished. Previously they shared this apartment with 2 other Mexicans, but both of these men have been deported.

G. Quality of food, clothing and health care

Jose and Carol appear to have adequate food and were casually dressed. Jose is afraid to seek medical care in spite of his health problems because he fears that the doctor will report him to the authorities.

H. Basic values

Both Carol and Jose are terribly concerned about their legal problems related to his status in the U. S. Neither one is well educated and their main concern seems to be the struggle to maintain themselves on a day-to-day basis.

I. Knowledge of Status

The following report was submitted to the immigration authorities by the interviewer:

Carol knew that Jose was in the U. S. illegally and therefore contacted the immigration office to get information about marrying an illegal alien. She spoke with an agent who told her that he did not know of any cases in which the Mexican husband treated his

American wife well after he became legal. He also gave her a list of names of women who had married Mexican men. When Carol tried to reach these women she found that either they were not working numbers or that there was no one there by that name. Jose and Carol were married in November of 1979 and shared an apartment with two other Mexicans who were also residing here illegally. All these men worked in a restaurant whose owner paid the rent for them. One evening last Spring one of the other Mexicans was picked up by the police. The immigration service was contacted and subsequently two immigration officers entered Jose and Carol's apartment and bedroom while the couple was sleeping. When Carol became upset at having two strange uninvited men staring at her and her husband the officers backed out, closed the door and then knocked.

Carol and Jose were told to be at the immigration office by 10:00 a.m. that day. While Jose was being fingerprinted and otherwise processed, Carol was strongly advised by an immigration officer to divorce Jose. He claimed that Jose would cease to support her and probably beat her and be otherwise abusive once he got his green card.

Later Jose and Carol were told to bring some papers and personal effects of their former roommates to the immigration office. They were told that if they didn't comply the immigration service would refuse to process Jose's papers and that they were under no obligation to do so unless the couple cooperated completely.

At this point Jose and Carol have an attorney and have been told that Jose must return to Mexico and reenter the U. S. with his papers in order. This is difficult due to his extremely low income. They are deeply afraid of the immigration service and have asked to remain

anonymous because they fear reprisal if they make a formal complaint.

The interviewer subsequently learned that Carol and Jose are unwilling to proceed with a formal complaint because Carol also has legal difficulties which may come to light during an investigation.

INTERVIEW: 5

A. Citizenship and places of residence in U. S.

Maria and Jesse Sanchez are both from Mexico. They both entered the U. S. legally, she in 1960 and he in 1967. They have lived in Chicago for four months, Laredo, Texas for five years and have since lived in St. Louis. They are both Mexican citizens.

B. Personal Data

Mrs. Sanchez is 40 years old and Mr. Sanchez is 49. They have been married 13 years and have 7 children aged 15, 12, 11, 9, 2½ and a pair of 4 year old twins.

C. Education

Mrs. Sanchez has had little formal schooling but is literate. Mr. Sanchez is illiterate. His only formal education was received in Texas where he attended school briefly to learn English and to read and write. He ceased going to school because he felt that he was too old to be able to learn these skills.

D. Employment profile

While living in Texas, Mr. Sanchez worked for the John Deere Co. He also had several factory jobs. He was not doing well there and they decided to move to St. Louis because Mrs. Sanchez' brother was able to get a job for Mr. Sanchez as a waiter in a hotel. They returned to Texas briefly where he again did factory work and then returned to St. Louis where they have since remained. At that point he worked

steadily as a waiter but in recent months he has been able to work sporadically because the hotel has needed fewer people for this work. Before the children were born, Mrs. Sanchez worked as a housekeeper.

E. Personal relationships in U. S. and homeland

Both Mr. and Mrs. Sanchez have many relatives in Mexico with whom they have maintained close contact. Mrs. Sanchez' brother still resides in St. Louis.

F. Physical surroundings

The Sanchez family lives in an old home which is in fairly good condition. It is sparsely furnished but clean and well kept.

G. Quality of food, clothing and medical care

Mrs. Sanchez explained that because her husband's income has dropped she was having trouble buying enough food for the family. She applied for food stamps and was given \$146.00 per month for the family. Mr. Sanchez showed the interviewer two weekly paychecks one for \$76.00 and the next for slightly less. Mrs. Sanchez also said that she had been able to buy only tennis shoes for the children's school started and that she did not know how they would manage to buy them winter clothing. They have no medical insurance and never seek medical care because of lack of money.

H. Basic values

The parents are proud that their children are doing well in school. Mr. Sanchez is proud of their literacy. Mrs. Sanchez said that her husband asked her to shop in stores out of the neighborhood because he is embarrassed to be using food stamps.

I. Knowledge of status

Although both Mr. and Mrs. Sanchez feel they are doing better in the U. S. than they would in Mexico they also indicated that they need

more assistance. They also felt that if they had been able to speak better English or if they could speak to someone in the government aid agencies they would be able to get more help. They were assisted in obtaining food stamps by a person from the Image office. They were also assisted in getting funds from the Emergency Crisis Assistance Program by this same person. The next time they tried to get aid they were alone. They received no additional emergency funds and their food stamps allotment was reduced. Mrs. Sanchez said "If you don't (have) somebody they don't help. If I go with (name of person) they fill out the papers right away. The next time I go alone and they say they don't (have) nothing. They say they don't (have) the money anymore." Mrs. Sanchez was also told that she should go to work even though she has seven children, three of whom are under school age.

Observation by the Interviewer

I had the opportunity to take a small part in assisting a group of Cubans who were being relocated in St. Louis. The following observations were made:

1. The Cubans had no idea of what was going to happen to them when they boarded the plane in Miami. The flight was delayed for several hours because of their fear and agitation.
2. The family which I drove to the hotel for their first night in St. Louis had no idea of where St. Louis was located in this country. They asked if they were close to New York City. It was apparent that they had been given little or no information about what they were facing.
3. Subsequently there have been many problems in finding appropriate housing and jobs for these people.

### CONCLUSION

Each of the respondents in these interviews came from very different backgrounds socially, economically, educationally, etc. It is impossible to provide a stereotype of their individual situations and needs simply on the basis of their being Hispanics.

However, several common themes emerged during these interviews. First and most importantly, each person was experiencing difficulties of one type or another because of their status as Hispanics. Either due to lack of knowledge about available assistance or because of inability to utilize this assistance due to communication, personal or cultural problems, each had been unable to take full advantage of that assistance which is available. They simply did not know what is available and/or how to discover what types of aid are possible for them. Often, they were also unable to communicate their needs to persons in a position to provide assistance.

A program which is designed to provide needed assistance and information to the Hispanic community would be a great boon to the Hispanic community. Such a program would need to be designed not only to provide this aid, but also to make it accessible to the people for whom it is created. In addition, such a program would only be truly effective if it took into account the felt need of the people who have these difficulties. Although the above mentioned goals seem obvious, failure to implement a strategy which includes them would doom such a program to failure, thereby perpetuating rather than alleviating the problems of Hispanics in Missouri.

INTERVIEWS

"LANGUAGE PROBLEMS IN THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN  
COMMUNITY OF KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI"

1980

Maria Elena Singelmann\*  
Peter Singelmann\*\*

\*Specialist in bilingual elementary education, M.A. in education, UMKC  
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and ethnic relations at UMKC

## METHOD

Two of the three major interviews were conducted in Spanish due to increased communication and to the establishment of trust necessary in the frank discussion of delicate issues. It has also been helpful to interview people with whom we have had extended previous acquaintance through a variety of professionally related contacts as well as friendship. The names of those interviewed have been changed to protect their identity.

### INTERVIEW: 1

#### A. General Background

Sra. Maria Rodriguez is a U. S. citizen, was born in Mexico. She is 49 years old, is married and has eight children. She is fluently bilingual. We have known her for two years. Maria is very independent, outgoing and goal-oriented. She does not fit the stereotype of "Mexicans". She was a School Community representative. Since the age of 22, she has had to work in unskilled jobs due to her husband's occasional layoffs at the railroad. She became interested in learning English in order to find better job opportunities.

#### B. Difficulties in Learning English

In spite of Maria's motivation, there were difficulties in attending English programs. For information as to existing programs, she "asked around" and heard of Adult English programs available at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, but in a different part of the community. Existing transportation was inefficient (time-consuming, detoured) public transportation. This forced her to learn to drive and obtain a car--which caused friction with her more traditionally oriented husband.

C. Difficulties of English-language programs today as perceived by this informant

1. Classes exist in Kansas City, Missouri in the UMKC Outreach program, in the Westside (Spanish American) community, but at a fee of \$15 per course. It is costly for a family with limited economic resources. Those who do attend, tend to see these expenses as a severe sacrifice. If several members of a family need these courses, it becomes nearly impossible to pay the cost.
2. There are limited facilities (not specified, because not well known by informant) at the Guadalupe Center.
3. The informant believes that there are more sophisticated community language programs for U. S. blacks and, recently, for Vietnamese immigrants.

D. Motivations of Qualified People to Work for Community Services

The informant is highly motivated and talented in dealing with children. Her social services for the Kansas City, Missouri School District as a community representative are highly rated. As a de facto social worker, she received minimum wages (ca. \$3.11 per hour) plus \$5.00 per month for gasoline. For her bilingual skills she received no corresponding salary increase above the minimum wage. She said that her kind of work is "for someone who really does not need the money." She eventually quit her position, because the time she spent for the services was not adequately remunerated. She established her own Day Care Center although she misses working in the school system. Her job today, she says, "is more realistic" because of the higher pay received than from the Kansas City School District.

When she quit her job with the School District, they apparently made no effort to replace her. As a result, her important role in dealing with

immigrants was not served (this information was verified from other sources as well). The person who was eventually hired has a scaled-down job (i.e., she does not help parents, if needed, to buy clothes, seek doctors, etc., and she is not bilingual.)

E. Health Clinic Services

She knows of many families who went to a nearby health center only when they got a note from the School District requiring immunization. But there is a great deal of hesitation on the part of many Spanish-speakers because of their insecurity in communicating with non-Spanish speaking staffs. (This refers to her past experiences, she does not know how the situation is now).

F. Schooling

Maria's children go to a private (Catholic) School, but there was a time when two of her children, for financial reasons, attended public schools. In two different schools, she complains, she failed to receive information from the School Administration when her children did not attend. In contrast, the private school, phones or sends letters immediately when her children are missing without excuses.

INTERVIEW: 2

A. General Background

Sra. Martinez has had a difficult life. She was born in Mexico. Her father left her mother. When her mother died, she moved to the United States at age 16. She returned to Mexico during the depression when, as an alien, she was not eligible for aid. After her husband died in 1967, she moved to Kansas City with her daughter. She is dependent on her daughter today, although she receives a minimum of social security. She worked as a restaurant chief's helper, seamstress and with laundries. Her

English is very limited. Since available English programs were outside her community, she did not attend them.

B. Failure to Obtain Immigrant Visa for her Son

She is very motivated to invite her family to the United States. With the help of her daughter Maria (cf. previous interview) she has tried for ca. 15 years to obtain an immigrant visa. Time and again they have failed. This year, she spent savings from social security money for an air fare for her son and his family. She obtained an initial visa for four weeks. When they entered the immigration office in Dallas, Texas the period was reduced to ten days.

There is a vicious circle involved in this process. She has found regular jobs for her son on several occasions (a job is a prerequisite to being given permission to stay in the country) but the time handling paperwork and in securing his visa took over a year, during which time the job opportunity he had was lost. Then, the whole process had to start over again. ..

According to Maria, her mother, after 15 unsuccessful years, is in a "deep depression". Mrs. Martinez says that her brother will stay here--one way or another. Illegal immigration seems to be encouraged by the bureaucratic mismanagement, she suggested, and added: "Working within the system does not pay off."

INTERVIEW: 3

A. General Background

The Ramos family includes six children, ages 4-17 years. The father entered this country as an illegal immigrant ca. one and one-half years ago; his wife and children arrived ca. one year ago. They left Mexico because they "had a hard time surviving there."

B. Language Barriers: Schooling

Their first problem was their six year old son who was misplaced to first grade (instead of Kindergarten) due to language-related misunderstandings. As a result, he was in a class where little focus was on language development, and he could not follow the instructions in English. He lost a year and will have to repeat first grade.

Two other children of the family were to be retained in their class due to arbitrary decisions of their school principal who had not yet received the teachers' student evaluations when making his decision. One of the bilingual teachers interviewed in the matter. The decision was made to pass the children to the next grade, apparently in great part because it was discovered that one of the children had already repeated this same class once before and it is school policy not to have a child repeat the same grade twice.

C. Post-secondary Education problems

During the summer season of 1980, one of the children was offered a scholarship at one of the community colleges in the Kansas City, Missouri area. But, when he could not provide a birth certificate or a "foreign student" visa, he was unable to receive the scholarship.

D. Health Service Problems

One day, one of the children had a serious tooth infection. A woman whose child was cared for by the mother of the sick child saw him with a huge swelled cheek. The mother said that their relative who speaks English had not had time to accompany the child to a physician or a dentist. Another woman had offered to take the child to a doctor the following week. The lady whose child was cared for by the mother proceeded to take the child to the UMKC Dental School herself. She also paid the fees of \$6.00 and \$14.00 for treatment and antibiotics (the tooth could not

be treated until three days later, after the swelling had subsided).

The problem in this situation was that the family had neither the money even for minimal care, the transportation to get the child to a doctor, or the language capability to explain what the problem was.

This experience is similar to responses obtained from other sources of information: When illnesses require more than a simple injection, the language barrier represents a serious handicap for delivery of services.

**E. Work Injury**

Mr. Ramos works in a factory where dangerous (including fatal) injuries have occurred in the past. When he was injured (a chip in his eye), one day, he did not want to see a doctor, and he was "afraid to push for" health insurance by the company. He did not want to "rock the boat," given his ambivalent position as an illegal immigrant. He "wanted to leave things as they are"--not a rational reason, but a psychologically explicable response.

**F. Driver's License**

Mr. Ramos has an inexpensive old car, titled in his name, but not a driver's license. He does not have someone either to drive him to where the tests are conducted or an interpreter for the driving test instruction.

**G. Housing**

The Ramos family found a place by driving around on their own. They found an apartment with two bedrooms for \$250 a month. The place was plagued by sewage water leaking into the kitchen from the toilet of the upstairs apartment, cockroaches, and other problems. The landlord expressed prejudices and evicted them at short notice without an adequate reason. The only way the family knew how to look for a house was by driving around in a neighborhood. They found a house for which they pay \$150 per month for three years, after which the house is supposed to be

theirs. But they have no written contract. The house is in a very poor neighborhood and in totally inadequate condition. They had to install plumbing facilities, install doors to the outside and do not know yet, whether the furnace will work in the upcoming winter. They have "heard" about sources of aid (e.g. Salvation Army, as they said) but no specific information as to what is available or where and under what conditions. Hence, it remains a matter of "sit and wait" to see what to do next.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FROM OTHER INTERVIEWS AND FIELD EXPERIENCES

##### Teacher's Aides

Generally, teaching aides are difficult to find not because bilingual individuals do not exist or are not interested or capable, but because the wages are so very low. Those who do work tend to do it for a combination of idealism and desperate need for extra money aside from their husbands' incomes. In contrast to other teachers' aides, they do not just do minor chores (xeroxing, etc.) but are involved in often fulltime and intensive work with overtime. They are involved in work which usually requires professional training and with that extra payment, yet they are paid very minimally for their work. In our experience, most of the teachers' aides are also very highly motivated and committed due to their own previous experiences in language problems.

#### CENTRAL PROBLEMS REFLECTED IN THE INTERVIEWS

- 1) Language barriers provide restraints for adaptation/accessibility to important social services.
- 2) Language barriers tend to provide a vicious circle wherein Spanish-speakers tend to be discouraged from taking advantage of available services and thus remain under precarious conditions occasionally regarding their physical survival.

- 3) Hence, it is necessary to develop programs which simultaneously attack language barriers, provide access to social services, etc.
- 4) Predjudice and discrimination have historically been, and still are, real in the Spanish-American communities. This is reflected also in negative reenforcement of Spanish speaking children, parents and even leading professionals. As a result, many adults and children attempt to forget their Spanish without necessarily having yet arrived at an adequate command of English. There are corresponding problems related to school performances and, later, access to professional opportunities.
- 5) It is important that there be programs, particularly in institutions of education and social services (especially health services) where the non-Spanish speaking employees are at least involved in regular workshops where they are trained in issues related to cultural minorities such as the Mexican-Americans, and where the professionals acquire knowledge of some basic, crucial and frequently encountered words (i.e., it is not absolutely necessary that they speak the language but at least are able to identify critical problems).
- 6) There must be regularly available, translators which are able to provide communication between agencies providing social services and the recipients of those social services. In this context, many resource people are readily available as already employed professionals ranging from secretaries to administrators. What is needed is a more systematic organization to utilize these abilities.
- 7) The most essential area is at the level of children's primary and secondary education. Here, school districts must be supported through higher level and systematically institutionalized (regular) fundings which do not depend on year-to-year hopes for governmental grants. In this connection, the state legislatures and the government agencies are the only institutional structures capable of fulfilling these functions. While extra funds may be difficult to shift into such programs for political reasons, particularly during periods of infla-

tion and unemployment, they would payoff in the long run by providing help now to correct problems which would cause far greater dependence by the person in the future on government programs. It is far better to deal now with the root of the problem than to treat symptoms later on, never solving the problem.

8) This discussion has focused on the specific problems of Mexican-Americans of immigrant descent. Their problems due to their lower-class position are viciously reinforced by language problems. It should be emphasized however, that the fundamental problem is the tendency of poverty to be self-perpetuating over generations, regardless of ethnic traits. While some ethnic groups have cultural traits which stimulate the kind of orientation which makes upper or middle class lives more accessible, this should be considered as a remarkable exception, rather than the rule.

We have attempted to outline the inherent problems of programs involving language barriers. It is a necessary condition for resolving the economic problems of Mexican-Americans to deal with the problem of intentional or unintentional patterns of discrimination related to language barriers.